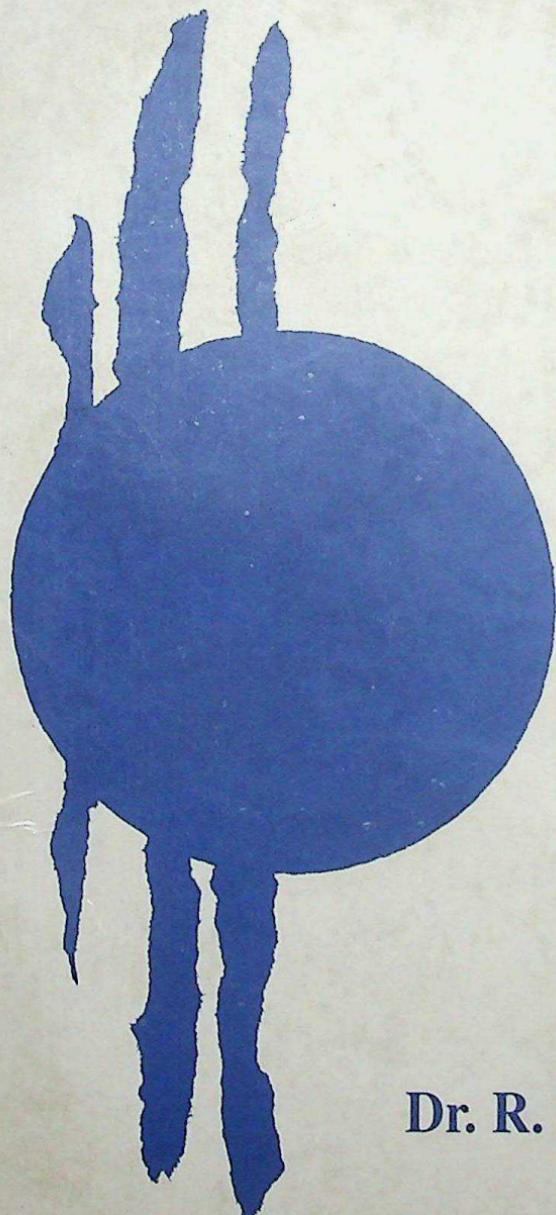


# Arjan Dev Majboor



Dr. R. L. Bhat



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Dr. R.L.Bhat

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## Foreword

It is a pleasure as well as a privilege for me to commend this collection of reviews, notices and citations of the *WAVES*. As reviewer after reviewer says, and their number attests to, Arjan Dev Majboor needs no introduction to the world of literature especially in the northern parts of India. Apart from his mastery over his native tongue Majboor is a litterateur writing in three languages current in the north of India, has an in-depth grip over Sanskrit and Persian literature, especially poetics, and has done research work in other major languages of Jammu and Kashmir, viz. Dogri with an enviable insight. As a senior poet he commands instant respect from the litterateurs in these languages, as a master of the craft of wielding the pen, he easily has a stature of eminence, and as a perceptible human being he is liked by all. With his exquisite background his work is bound to attract attention and notice.

His work in fact has commanded note and commendation in Kashmiri from his very first volume published in early fifties of the last century. Translation into English has opened a wide window on his work for the rest of the country to look at and peep into. The record of *WAVES* testifies to that. In the past four years since its publication the book of Majboor's verse has gone through two editions, been reviewed in most of the journals, dailies and periodicals devoted to literature, especially related to Kashmir. The book and its author have been conferred awards and accolades that all fine penmen and productions deserve. Yet Majboor is much greater than *WAVES*. His span and depth, his vision and versatility, his command over the language and literature of not only Kashmir but that of the adjoining areas and the mother-languages is bewildering. He writes of history and art, culture and

civilization, men and matters. One of the most recent pieces of his that this author read is his exposition of Dogri in a commemorative volume on the well-known linguist Professor Devi Shankar Devedi of Kurkhetra University.

Accordingly, one cannot but agree with Toshkhani's contention 'whether a slender volume like this of just 58 pages and containing 24 poems only - can provide an adequate insight into the dimensions of creativity of a poet who has been writing for the last 50 years and has produced five volumes of poetry is rather doubtful'. That slender volume has grown by 14 pages and 6 poems, and another scholarly introduction by the acclaimed translator and critic of Kashmiri in subsequent edition. Nevertheless, that contention is still valid. *WAVES* is too small to adequately represent this multidimensional personality, this multifaceted writer. Yet it is a porthole that has shown Majboor not only all over the north India but in the far reaches of Kolkata and Bangalore. Like Tagore's *Gitanjali* *WAVES* has taken Majboor from confines of the Kashmiri knowing public and cast his uttering all over the land of India. Probably, Hindi would have been as good a vehicle; English has served this purpose better. Had *WAVES* not appeared non-Kashmiri people in Tagore's land might never have tasted the rich flavors Majboor has been brewing! There the contribution of its able translator Arvind Gigoo is undeniable. Indeed Gigoo has clothed Majboor's impressions in the lingua franca not only of India but the whole world. His craft is good and great and as significant to the success and access of *WAVES* as Majboor's. The style and craft of Gigoo is noticeable in the whole book. A translation may be proffering a chewed morsel as T N Dhar points out with the anecdote from one of the famed sons of Kashmiri soil Kumarjiva, but this morsel has not only been chewed well but has been presented in an appealing, appetizing manner. That comparison would only be better with the

Japanese with whom every act, from eating to lovemaking is a fine art—seeable, savory, enjoyable. If he has broken the consistent regularity of the Kashmiri lines in original Kashmiri he has also given reconstruction that invests it with the modern flavors and forms. Many a time he is transcreating more than translating and that is as good as it can get.

This volume has articles by almost all the known litterateurs around us. There are eminent critics, poets, writers, journalists, dramatists, professors and lay readers. The wide spectrum of penmen that has thus been forced to stand up and note *WAVES* and comment upon it is the best gauge of its impact. It is also a wholesome comment in itself on the work. Some have penned poems on the book and its author; others have been provoked to probe into life and times of Majboor. It would not be correct to say that Majboor has been brought into limelight with *WAVES*; he has written and published much more than this slim volume whether with 24 or 30 poems. But this volume has given Majboor's persona a new dimension and taken him to the language of the world. The write-ups presented here clearly bring this fact.

They have served as an apt occasion to look deep into the work of this major contemporary poet of Kashmir. The reviewers have accordingly brought out hidden facets of the poet to fore. They have highlighted his contributions, pointed to different genres Majboor has tried his hand at, looked into his variegated interests, and made valuable comments on his work, appreciative as well as critical. There may be areas of disagreement, points where the authors have differed but the undercurrent of appreciation of Majboor's art is noticeable. Commanding appreciation of critics as wide and as removed in perception and space as the contributors here are is an uphill task for any litterateur. But Majboor does it effortlessly because he is a visionary to the core, a preceptor with a heart, a

penman with mastery over his medium and art. And above all and everything he is poet, as fine as they come. These essays bring all that to our focus and attention. Come let us sit back and savor the fare Majboor has been serving us for more than half a century. May the Lord enable him to pile our plate still higher !

Jammu

May 1, 2002

*Dr. R.L.Bhat*

## Majboor & His Poetry

Trilokinath Raina

*WAVES* is a collection of thirty poems of Arjun Dev Majboor, selected and very ably translated into English by Arvind Gigoo of the Camp College for Migrants, Udhampur, J&K. This book won an award from Poets Foundation, Calcutta, which was presented to Majboor by Chief Justice Shyamal Kumar Sen of the Calcutta High Court on 20 December, 1999. Before this he had received an award from the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages in 1993 for his collection of poems, *Pady Samayik* ( Footprints of Time). However, awards do no make a man; they are only a visible and legitimate recognition of the stature that he has already attained.

Arjan Dev Majboor ( real name Arjan Nath Koul ) of Zainapora in Pulwama District (b.1924 ) saw many vicissitudes in his early life. His calm exterior, which Moti Lal Saqi has called deceptive, belies the turmoil his heart has passed through. He has had a chequered career. Orphaned very early, his life was a courageous and determined struggle against want. Having to keep the kitchen fire alive when he matriculated, he worked for some time in a co-operative bank, then got a job in the court but the experience was not very encouraging. In desperation he left for Lahore, where he gained in two ways; he started learning Sanskrit, and meetings with Rahul Sanskritayan gave him a knowledge of Marxism, and both these stood him in good stead. He appeared on the literary scene in a turbulent time when a new age was being born, an age which all the writers hailed as the promised millennium. The consequent change it fathered was visible in poetry not only in the

mental attitude but also in form and techniques. The *ghazal* was being dropped and some western forms were ushered in. In fact it looked like Kashmiri literature was casting off the slough of old, ossified decadent traditions of thought and technique and acquiring a resurgence of life it had never known before. Not that great poets and writers never existed in the happy valley. In fact the history of our literature starts with a poet who has always remained and will perhaps ever remain unmatched for all time, i.e, Lal Ded. What I mean is that never before did the whole community of writers and all artists, collectively, have a rejuvenating bath at a new helicon, a new fountain of the muses. It is this atmosphere that Majboor found himself in and was led most powerfully into the vortex. True, from Rahul Sankritayan he had acquired a knowledge of how matter shapes mind, but a knowledge of dialectical materialism is not enough to make you a poet. In the new environment he found himself very powerfully influenced by the creators of the new age—Mahjoor, Nadim and the other writers of the new community of progressive writers, and he also plunged in. On his return from Lahore he worked in Prem Nath Bazaz's standard till it closed down and unemployment greeted him again till he equipped himself with a teaching degree and was absorbed in the Education Department.

But despite joining the Progressive movement—in fact he also worked as an assistant editor of its journal *Kwong Posh* for some time—he never actually belonged to the movement as a committed progressive writer like Nadim, Roshan, Zutshi, etc. but was like most followers of the movement, drawn in but always outside the ring of political commitments, though his firm belief was that literature cannot be divorced from society. His involvement with the problem of the workers and the peasants was unquestionable and always remained, but not in the sloganising manner. The sighs of the poor and beauty of nature—forests, rivers, meadows, mountain peaks—are blended in his poems.

His poems, short stories and critical essays have been published in the various journals in Kashmir and outside. He has translated Kalidasa's *Meghadootam* into Kashmiri (*Obra Shechh*), published monographs on Krishna Razdan and Rahul Sankritayan (Sahitya Akademi), to mention only the most notable of his compositions. He is not only a poet but also a seasoned scholar and writer who has a number of published material—books and critical articles—to his credit.

“The publication of *Waves* bears testimony to Majboor's serious concern as a scholarly poet for the projection of Kashmiri literary works across the globe. The present volume is a laudable effort especially to serve the objective of reaching a wider relationship across the country and abroad. This gives an access to the cultural content of the original poems.”

A.N. Dhar.

This is what any poet writing in a language with limited readership would invariably desire. But before focussing on the poems presented in this selection, it would be appropriate to have a look at all his poems from the day he wrote his first anthologized poem *Shongaan Yeli Raat* to the present day and how he has evolved as an artist during the last half century.

He has experimented with various forms, and emerged as an essentially *nazam* writer. And he is most certainly a nature poet. His deep rooted love for the sights and sounds of this paradise on Earth (which bewitched Jahangir once and continues to leave lesser mortals too spellbound) is easily understood. I find it necessary to mention it right in the beginning to emphasize the fact that it forms the basic theme of whatever he wrote. It remains the backdrop even when he is talking about something else.

His first collection of poems *Kalaam-e-Majboor* was published in 1955. This was followed by *Dashahaar* in 1983, *Dazavuny Kosam* in 1987, *Pady Samayik* in 1993 and *Tyol* in

1995. His creative talent did not confine itself to the field of poetry alone but ranged from short stories to literary criticism, his most notable set of essays being *Tehqeeq*. However, at present we are concentrating on his evolution as a poet. It was a long journey from *Kalaam-e-Majboor* (1995) *Dashahaar* (1983), in which we find Majboor having matured as an artist and having developed a liking for the short poem, which the great poets like Nadim and Rahi had already inaugurated in Kashmiri. You find in this collection, simplicity of ideas combined with technical dexterity. One of the significant poems in this series is *Tamashaa* (presented as *A Juggler's Trick* in English translation in *Waves*). The juggler comes with the usual tabor and entertains the spectators with what is essentially an illusion. The poet wants to convey that life itself is an illusion, a grand show compered by a master juggler.

The poems translated by Arvind Gigoo bear 'eye-catching and appropriate titles' and have been selected from the various publications of Majboor. Prof. A.N Dhar says that "the translations capture both the essence and broad details of the original pieces. Happily the author of the poems and the translator complement each other. As a final fine product, *Waves* not only reflects the rich content of the originals, but also reproduces the free verse form of most Kashmiri lyrics."

The very first poem, *Portrait of a Child*, where he presents a contrast between innocence and experience is strongly reminiscent of William Blake :

Grown-ups don't remember purity  
and  
children don't know defilement.

*The Topsy-turvy Tree* is a picture of the present urban culture depicting a steady collapse of time-honored values. The

following satirical lines convey the poet's idea of the topsy-turvydom of a system with people facing urgent problems like deforestation, water scarcity and pollution :

The tree said :

'Why need water  
when all are mad?

Henceforth,

flowers will bloom up in the sky,  
a whirlpool will trap all,  
it will rain acid,  
beauty will be auctioned,  
the wise will multiply,  
greenery will disappear,  
stones will cover the fields,  
the lakes will turn into sand  
and  
moans will resound.

Even memory will end.'

In fact the poem doesn't look like a satire but an unembellished dark prophecy. **The Fowl** presents the stubborn irrationality of the Kashmiri intelligentsia which provides an excellent opportunity to the sensible practical man to have a field day. There are quite a few poems referring to the poet's loss of home, the land of his birth, the land of his culture, the land of his forefathers. He has for the last eleven years now lived a migrant's life at Udhampur, just as others of his community too were uprooted on a fateful black night in 1990 and flung across the Banihal to the arid land beyond. **The Prison** is one such place, a migrant camp in Jammu with two neighbours by its side – the state prison and the cremation ground. The condition of those in the camp is worse than that of those who inhabit the

other jail, where fellows are sent for a specific period after having committed crimes, and are set free after that to join their families. Those who come to the camp are absolutely innocent, but their imprisonment is for life, and there is no hope of them going back to where they belong. The “blossoms” mentioned in the poem are Kashmiri Pandits in exile, living in ‘the dark cells’ in the camp. Having left the valley when the ‘marigold was the last flower of the year in bloom’, they have been a monument of patience in exile. **The Snowman** is a picture of their condition. It keeps on melting slowly and silently.

In **Wilderness** the poet has a hope that the period of this ghastly existence in the wilderness will end one day. **The City** gives you briefly a picture of what happened when “the wisest among the people” said :

“Now everybody is to himself;  
I am no one to show the way.”

It is a fact. It happened in Srinagar. It was this rather than the strong arm of the militant that created a community of refugees. And this community is doomed to exist in a rootless state. The only thing that floods ones mind is endless nostalgia :

Each warm evening  
wet memories  
transfix my heart  
and  
cripple me.  
Hopelessness floods the room,  
objects shiver.  
My existence is a knot.  
Home and river and rustle  
flit and pass.

**To The Swan** is part of a poem in Majboor's collection entitled *Tyol*. The swan is the mount of goddess Saraswati and has the magical faculty of seeing and knowing everything, and sifting truth from illusion. It is of this mythological character that the poet employs to reveal the present predicament of the suffering people. But more than anything else, the poet describes the beauty of the valley which he has lost.

In **Chiselled Words** the poet speaks as the literary craftsman. One sees his preoccupation with the problem of language and meaning. It depicts the poet as a conscious craftsman operating as a non-conformist in the realm of language, wrestling with words to accommodate them to his purpose. So also in **Sign** he dwells on the evocative power of words.

In the end, I would quote Prof. Dhar again : "Many poems employ words (as phrasal clusters) that function as images and symbols – a fact that also accounts for their tautness and density of meaning. The poems reflect the poet's broad humanitarian outlook and his serious concern for the preservation of our age-old culture. *Waves* is most welcome as a volume that is innovative in several respects. A lovable book, it makes pleasant reading."

## *Waves – An Analysis*

*Maharaj Krishan Santoshi*

*Waves* is a collection of poems, originally written in Kashmiri by Arjan Dev Majboor, the noted Kashmiri poet, and translated into English by Arvind Gigoo, a poet himself. Since the translator is also a poet, as such there is no scope for any lack of sensibility on the part of the translator. In fact, the merit of his translation is laudable and deserves all sorts of appreciation. I have read these poems in original Kashmiri also but I confess that these poems have appealed more to me in their present form. It is because the translator has transcreated these poems in rendition.

Arjan Dev Majboor has completed half a century of his literary career. His poetic journey has witnessed many trends in literature and he has been shaping himself throughout according to these trends. He is a dynamic poet by that way. I am a regular reader of his verses and value his concerns and commitments towards art and literature. Arjan Dev Majboor is a restless soul who always wants to come out with something. Although he is a septuagenarian yet old age has not touched his spirits. He is, as such, the most diligent poet of Kashmiri.

*Waves* is a small book containing twenty four poems with a fine get-up. The first poem entitled **A Portrait of a Child** is a small poem wherein youth confronts old age. In fact, it symbolises the conflict between purity and defilement. The poet's answer to this confrontation is amazing :

The old don't remember purity  
and  
children do not know defilement.

**The Topsy-turvy Tree** is a poem in dialogue between the poet and the tree. The tree reveals the present-day condition of the world where “truth is proscribed,/the guilty thrive,/virtue has decayed/and/morals are dead.” This is the world where “all are making merry/and man is for sale” and where one day “it will rain acid,/beauty will be auctioned,/the wise will weep/and the ignorant will multiply.” The poet and the tree, in fact, are two halves of the poet’s personality, one half wishes to take revenge upon this world and the other half tries to save it from the possible doom. The poem expresses more pessimism rather optimism.

**Snow-man** is a poem with excellent imagery like “red chilly is my mouth,/the charcoal pieces are my eyes/the staff is in my right hand.” It gives vent to the poet’s feeling of shrinkage in exodus. The space of our living has shrunk and distances have widened in human relations.

**The Coming Millennium** voices poet’s optimism about the future and he believes that a new world is taking shape. The poet is eager to see this new dream of his happen although he may not witness it himself. In the poem **Chiselled Words** the poet is in search of new words as the old ones have lost their meaning. The words have become too corrupt to arouse any virtue. The poet desires to acquire afresh the “miracle of words” so that this place earth is washed and stale conscience of people sweetened. **The Fowl** is a unique poem in this connection. It is based on a proverb often quoted in Kashmiri “KUKRAS CHHAI KUNEEY ZANG”. The poet has extended its meaning and made it a medium to satirise those intellectuals of our times who are stubborn and fixed ideologically, unmindful of the cat who will pounce upon the fowl and have a hearty meal.

**To The Swan** is a long poem, originally published in Kashmiri poetry collection **TEOL**. The whole poem is in narrative form with a clear purpose to highlight the historical

importance of Kashmir and its cultural ethos. Only the first part of the poem has been included in this collection. Swan is the chariot of the goddess Saraswati, and it has the facility to segregate water from the milk. This mythological character has been employed by the poet artistically to reveal his present state of mind on Kashmir and its Kashmriyat, which at present are in the hold of the gun. The poem reveals richness of the poet's abode and also expresses the nostalgia of the poet, who is at present in the exile with other members of his community. The poet opens heart to the Swan and gives him the "chariot of his liquid memories". The depiction of nature in all its hues and shades makes it a beautiful poem of numerous landscapes. The whole poem should have been translated and included in this collection for the benefit of the readers.

*Waves* is a collection of poems with scattered beauty here and there, although there are some barren spots also. But the collection on the whole will give some sort of satisfaction to poetry lovers but with a suggestion :

The solitude of beauty  
is  
dear  
but  
dearer  
the search for a ray  
in darkness.

## Majboor's *Waves*

Dr. K.L.Chowdhury

*Waves* by Arjan Dev Majboor is a collection of 23 short and one long poem – each poem a wave from the oceanic mind of the poet, each wave impacting the reader and scattering treasures from the ocean. The waves keep striking the mind even as one moves away from the source, in continuous replay, for a long time afterwards. The author is a magician using the sleight of words to trick and captivate, a sculptor chiselling words to perfection, a master blender concocting a heady cocktail of words to ‘sweeten stale conscience’ and creating fantastically unique imagery by endowing words with movement like making “Shiva dance a laugh and the whole becoming a cosmic laughter” and ‘colour giving fragrance’. Even time is personified and made to laugh in the poems.

Here the reader feasts on a kaleidoscope of ideas, moods and expressions for the mind of the poet is like mercury, restless and on the move. Like a bird on the wing he is jumping out of the window of the ‘Prison’ to sail into the vastness of space, touching virgin areas, creating virgin expressions like the “infant who wept into existence” or the poet revealing “the sacred hush of my being” to Swan.

Painfully conscious of the metamorphosis taking place in the world which moves inexorably towards a stage where he creates the frightful scenario of topsy-turvy values with the roots of trees turned towards the sky, truth being proscribed, beauty auctioned, the wise weeping and the ignorant multiplying, he yet strikes a note of hope and optimism as he moves into the new millennium and invokes Saraswati to

illumine the world with knowledge, art, poetry, music and dance. In a poetic expression of C.T.B.T and total disarmament he pleads with mankind to melt all weapons and call for 'the seed, the sickle and the water.'

The pervasive sense of doom in the city with a thousand masters and a thousand rulers and each one to himself while a camel runs amok is a reflection of the fragmentation, isolation and degeneration of the body politic in our nation and while we go on arguing and fighting each other on trivialities the wily cat swallows our foul making a hearty meal of it.

Stung by the rootlessness of exile, parched for a 'swig' of nectar from his homeland, crippled by the 'wet memories that transfix' his heart and tragically aware of the past, the present and the future 'flung to pieces before the gun' Arjan Dev Majboor yet harbours a sanguine hope that the walls that divide will crumble down and that the flames that have engulfed the valley will by some divine intervention, transform into flowers for he firmly believes in the purity of the soul of Kashmir and the strength of the penance of its seers, savants and sages. The nostalgia for homeland runs strong and deep in the poem **To The Swan**, which appears to be inspired by Kalidasa's **Meghdoot**, as he asks the bird to go and visit places in a backward journey in time, holding the mirror of memories to the bird and re-creating the images of the hallowed past. Would it that the Swan were also to assume the role of a dove of peace.

There is a touch of philosophy when the poet speaks of holding the reins and yet not knowing who pulls them, or of the leaky boat of life with neither the rudder nor the oarman visible or the funeral feeling of existence that stimulates the poet to exhort mankind to tighten the strings and use the plectrum and continue to produce the music of life. He himself is not deterred even though he spent his age writing the legend while the pages leapt into the sky and a dusty cobweb besieged him and stranded him in the

wilderness for he still manages to light a lamp in the whirlwind, being himself a stage in the caravan of existence, a milestone, a landmark in the march of humanity.

The sketches by Vijay Zutshi are highly evocative and the translation by Arvind Gigoo superb. He is a master craftsman and one doesn't feel it is not the original. I wish many of our Kashmiri poets got a translator like him to take the wealth of our poetry to the vast English knowing readership across the globe.

## Poems of Majboor

Dr. T.N.Dhar

I should begin this review with a confession; I have not read the poetry of Majboor in the original Kashmiri. So I am happy to respond to the translated version of his selected poems in the *Waves*, which I must say at the very outset, is quite readable. The poems I have learnt from Majboor himself, have been selected by the translator, Arvind Gigoo, from his various published collections, and deal with several interesting themes and moods. Unfortunately, I have no way of knowing what considerations guided his selection, and how easy or difficult was the job translating them.

Because of their thematic similarities, the poems can be read in several clusters. The first one deals with the perennial concerns of poetry: the mystery of the creative act, its joys and perplexities, its agonies and ecstasies. The second includes poems that embody the poet's response to his immediate contingent reality. These deal with the appalling inequity in our social fabric, the suffering and indigence of the common people, and the pain and trauma of his small community, which was forced to migrate from the Valley of Kashmir. The third is of poems that generate varied and contrastive moods: while some mourn the loss of values and ideals, others celebrate hope and promise and dreams of peace and harmony.

A good number of poems are about the intricacies, the delicate shades, and the complexities of artistic creation. The *Fossil*, for example, is less about an anthropological curiosity and more about seeing objects in a moment of stasis, which obviates the fear of loss and change and affirms the

permanence of art of the “true, the good and the beautiful” over the mutability and corruption of life. A similar mood defines the spirit of *The Broken Hand*. Severed from some pristine idol, it is not a mere relic to be treasured for its beauty, but a source of speculative excursus into the artistic and spiritual, of dreamlike possibilities which contrast with the nightmare of the existential burden of life. *The Painting* dramatizes the very process of creation, in which the imaginative powers of the poet are brought into full play to create an ideal situation of the “painter getting merged into the picture”. The immensity and force of this power is seen at its explosive best in another aptly titled poem, *Creation*, in which the nebulous flux of life – suggested through its diverse and desperate images – is transmuted into a pleasing garland of harmonious cohesion. The alchemy of the creative process is suggested forcefully by the kinetic power of its imagery.

The poet is not content merely to create poems that please by their exquisite shape; he wants them to embody a strong regenerative force, which has the potential of changing the contours of the existential, of affecting the quality of life in this world. His struggle to get the right kind of words for shaping his new compositions, in the *Chiselled Words*, does not merely reflect his anxiety to create an impressive poem but also his eagerness to invest it with the power to regenerate and to renovate. Poems, in Majboor’s estimation, can “wash the pale earth” to “cover it with light”, to “sweeten stale conscience”, and to “light lamps in the dark meandering streets”. The poet’s wrestling with the agonizing and ecstatic aspects of the creative process, in the *Secret*, are suffused with the same aspiration, for:

“The silence of the night  
and  
its solitude  
are a hope for the morning”.

The same hope permeates the texture of *Wilderness*. The poet is painfully aware of the “dusty cobweb” that has besieged him, but he is hopeful of lighting “a lamp in the whirlwind.” This consoling thought animates even a murky poem like the *Funeral*, in which he sees the truth of our continuous involvement with “cold funerals”, but also affirm that life is still livable, because it is full of ever-new possibilities. Hope also colours the vision of a dejected lover, for he sees that

New twigs will sprout  
 The mirror will speak,  
 The earth will smile,  
 the rising sun will watch  
 her dream and her dance.

A number of poems provide a scathing criticism of the society of our day, the most prominent being *The Topsy-turvy Tree*. The image in the title of the poem is emblematic of the physical and environmental degradation of the world as well as of confusion in its scale of values. The images of devastation, decay, and sterility dominate its landscape to create a kind of Eliotian Waste Land, where the reverberating moans give us intimations of the world of pain, suffering and bondage. *The Hungry Man* is a sharp picture of the growing injustice and unfairness of life in the “sinful city”. The hungry man, its central focus, is in a deplorable condition of want and misery which contrasts starkly with the opulence and affluence of the vulgar few. Even though he finds a stone with which to hit at the unjust system, he fails to achieve anything; and his pausing “for a thought” suggests more his impotence than stoic wisdom. This sharpens our disgust towards the archetypal city of our times. Another concretely realized picture in *The City* is of the city the poet had to leave because of the rise of

militancy there. It exposes the stupidity and confusion of the people who took control of its affairs from their wise forebears, creating false knowledge, in which violent ways are confused with the struggle for attaining freedom. Moved by the pain and suffering of the people of his community who had to flee their homes and hearths to take refuge in camps, the poet *In Prison* laments that their condition is worse than that of prisoners in jails.

The poems of pain, suffering and displacement stem from the experience of the poet. But this does not diminish his hope in the intrinsic goodness of human beings. With the help and blessings of goddess Saraswati, the muse he knows so well, he charges his poems with the power to shape a new world of hope, love and peace. The poem embodying this vision is appropriately called *The Coming Millennium*. This very hope, vain though it might seem to many of us, informs the spirit of the longest poem in the collection, *To the Swan*. The poet pleads with the swan to go to his native land over vales and hills, and to all the beautiful places which lie ravaged at this moment to tap their spirit and energy for accomplishing what he earnestly wishes:

“To restore peace in the valley  
to cure all aching wounds  
and  
to end grief.”

Several poems in the collection stand apart. While *A Juggler's Trick* skilfully brings out the evanescence and evasiveness of life, *The Fowl*, though meant to dramatize the stubbornness of self-styled intellectuals, is somewhat coarse and plain. With deft strokes, the *Portrait of a Child* builds the contrast between the purity and innocence of childhood and the corruption that overlays the process of growing up. A similar skill is in evidence when the poet transmutes the familiar image of a *Snowman*

to emphasize a vital truth about us, that we are constantly moulded by physical and social pressures, which prevent us from acquiring our distinct identities. The playful act of a child, which is a common sight in the valley of Kashmir during winter months, is used to telling effect.

All in all, the poems in the volume are uplifting. As is evident in the translated version of the poems, the poet has handled themes with skill, economy, and with a surety of touch. Except for an odd line or phrase, which makes the reader stop for a while, the poems read well. A little bit of retouching will help smooth such rough edges. We hope that the poet and the translator will sit together to make that possible, and also produce another volume of translated poems, so that Kashmiri poetry can reach a larger audience.

## Poetry in The Time of Exile

Dr. Shashi Shaikhar Toshkhani

Well known Kashmiri poet Arjan Dev Majboor, now living as a displaced person in Jammu's Udhampur town, is making 'Waves' literally for *Waves* is the title he has given to the recently published collection of his selected Kashmiri poems translated into English by Arving Gigoo. The idea perhaps is, to present the best of his work to an audience not acquainted with Kashmiri. But whether a slender volume like this – of just 58 pages and containing 24 poems only – can provide an adequate insight into the dimensions of creativity of a poet who has been writing for the last 50 years and has produced five volumes of poetry is rather doubtful.

Arjan Dev Majboor is an important name in contemporary Kashmiri poetry, not only because he has had a rather long innings as a poet, but also because he was part of a circle to which poets like Dina Nath Nadim, Rehman Rahi and Amin Kamil belonged and with them had a role in launching the progressive moment in the post-independence era. Believing literature to be a potent instrument to fight what they called "the imperialist forces" – a term that had a special connotation in the context of the political situation prevailing in Kashmir – the progressives wrote much that was propaganda and slogan mongering in the beginning, but with their sharp sense of realism and a proclivity for experimentation, they definitely helped in bringing about a change in the sensibility and idiom of Kashmiri poetry which had got bogged down in the "gul-o-bulbul" imagery. And when the progressive movement started disintegrating in the late fifties Nadim, Rahi and Kamil set out to explore new paths for them-

selves. Majboor did not lag for behind. Keeping track of the new literary developments, he too started experimenting quite meaningfully, with new forms and themes, and in the process succeeded in establishing a distinct idiom of his own. Ironically, however, four day wonders like Noor Mohammad Roshan hogged more limelight than poets like Majboor – not for academic or literary but political reasons. He remained constantly creative and is so to this day, even though Islamic terrorism has shattered the whole world around him.

One can not be sure whether *Waves* reflects all these shifts and developments in Majboor's poetry, but the image that this collection presents is of a poet deeply disturbed and distressed by the violence and terror that have ferociously mauled human values and the uninhibited sway of hate-breading ideologies that have put the future of the entire mankind in jeopardy – his own people being the worst victims of horrendous onslaughts. But what is typical of Majboor is his deep faith in the essential goodness of man, which he believes will eventually prevail. Existentialist problems also surface in these poems, though occasionally, and then there is that element of romanticism that cannot hold itself back. But what strikes one most is his optimism which not even the given circumstances of his and his people's forced exile have subdued. Perhaps, it is the nostalgia for his lost paradisal homeland that keep his creative juices flowing.

In poems like *The Topsy-Turvy Tree*, Majboor does, however, seem to be upset by the reversal of values that is creating an upheaval in the present day world. Warning of the apocalyptic events that could follow, leading to an inexorable end of everything, he says:

“Listen!  
There will be no forests  
eagles won’t fly,

they will walk,  
 love will wither,  
 compassion will burn  
 and man  
 with the snake  
 will enter the cave”

But in another poem, *The Coming Millennium*, he replaces these forebodings of doom with a vision of hope and peace. He dreams of a new world taking its birth amidst the present chaos, with Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning, guiding man's destiny and giving a call for reshaping and purifying everything in a dawn of new wisdom:

Purity will reign,  
 darkness will vanish  
 and fear will go.  
 love will prevail  
 peace will flower!

Yet the thought from which this optimism springs has a deeper core :

The solitude of beauty  
 is  
 dear  
 but  
 dearer  
 the search for a ray  
 in darkness.

*Lover*

It appears that though Arjan Dev Majboor has shed much of the ideological baggage he carried over from the days of “pro-

gressivism", his imagination is still animated by utopian dreams.

In the poem *Chiselled Words*, the poet seems to be facing a crisis of expression. Old words have lost their meaning in the changed context of things, and new words are needed to deal with the new reality, he feels:

Give me words  
 the miracle of words  
 give me the springs of love  
 the grey dawn  
 basketfuls of flowers  
 the dancing shy moon  
 fragrant colourful dusk.  
 They will wash the pale earth  
 light will cover the world.

But perhaps the poems that have the power to touch us and engross us most are those that reveal Majboor's passionate attachment to the land of his birth. The fragrance of Kashmir's soil wafts through these poems giving them their peculiar flavour. It is the trauma and tragedy of uprootment from this soil – a fate that the poet shares with lakhs of his other displaced and dispossessed brethren – that find most poignant expression in poems like *Wilderness*, *A Funeral*, *Mind*, *The Dance is On*, *Restless*, *Prison* and *To the Swan*, which resonate with nostalgia. They reflect his intense desire that the meaning of his existence should survive through memory in the nightmarish wilderness of exile:

Now  
 I am stranded in wilderness  
 waiting for the tree  
 the water

and  
the light

*Wilderness*

“Wet memories” of his ravaged home “transfix” the poet’s heart and leave him crippled and helpless:

That city is a litter of  
broken bricks  
burnt houses  
and choked gutters  
Their present,  
our past  
and your future  
fall to pieces before the gun

*Rootless*

Banished from his home, Majboor feels that he and his people are languishing as prisoners, their heritage destroyed and their past burnt. Yet there is hope in the core of this sadness and sorrow:

Heritage has gone astray  
because  
past has burnt.  
Blossoms have bloomed  
even in the dry sand

*To the Swan* is a long narrative poem written after the manner of Kalidas’ *Meghadootam* which Majboor happens to have translated into Kashmiri. Baring his heart before the swan, the vehicle of Saraswati, the goddess of Wisdom, he speaks of Kashmir, its past glories, its culture, the myriad hues of its

stunningly beautiful landscapes and the soul benumbing sense of having lost it all even as death and destruction stalk the paradisal valley where once “hermits meditated”. Pining for it, he wants the ordeal through which he and his people are passing to end.

“Piety will swill stones”, he hopes as “the soul of the valley is pure” – a rather very naïve summing up when the destiny of a whole people struggling for survival is at stake.

We can not say how reliable is evidence of the translation in helping us to form an opinion about the poems included in the selection. There is no introduction by the poet nor any translator’s note to guide the reader about the basis of this selection. Nor do we know whether the selection was done by the poet or the translator. However, Arvind Gigoo is himself a poet and a very competent translator, and the general tone and feel of his translations is good. What he has done in *Waves* is to recreate a new poem in English out of the materials of the Kashmiri originals, generally using the devise of paraphrasing, to bring out the quintessential meaning. And it is in this attempt of carrying across cultures that his English sometimes fails to take on the nuances of the original. At such places what slips away in the translation is the very Kashmiriness of the context. This is what has happened, for instance, in the poems *The Bronze Hand*. *The Painting* and *Chiselled Words* – all of which have been taken from the collection **Paad Samayik** (The Footprints of Time). In **The Bronze Hand**, “the lovely luminous hands” (“khoshivuny shangarafy atha”) of the original, have become *the Bronze Hand* and the lines “atha kastam divta sunday yus gomut ruzith dyana mauz/nata Gautam Buddh anugrab mudra darith” (the hands of some god lost in meditations or of Gautam Buddha in a posture bestowing grace) have been translated as “or a hermit’s meditating upon the word or Buddha’s when he spoke of fire. Similarly, in *The Coming Millenium*, Saraswati’s vehicle, “the white winged swan” has been translated as “the white winged horse”,

which just does not get with the original. Surely, the translator should have taken more care, for such things are bound to confuse the reader who has read the work at firsthand.

## Majboor's Verse on Worse in Kashmir

B.L.Kak

Events and happenings in Kashmir during the decade that was 1989-1999. They have been, and are being, discussed not only in Jammu and Kashmir, but also elsewhere in India and beyond its borders. And a Kashmiri poet has proved that Kashmir events can be taken note of not only by politicians, police personnel and press persons but by others as well.

The poet, under reference, is none other than Arjan Dev Majboor. Saddest though about political turmoil and militancy that forced him to leave Kashmir in 1990 and seek shelter in Udhampur sector of Jammu region has become too evident to be missed in his poems just published by him in New Delhi.

As many as 24 poems form part of Majboor's book titled *Waves*. And these poems have been translated from Kashmiri by Arvind Gigoo, who is currently residing in Udhampur sector. Undoubtedly, Arjan Dev Majboor's poetry is marked by deftness of expression and mature treatment. His poems constitute a muffled outcry of his bruised heart against the disappearance of old values in his homeland, Kashmir.

A glaring sample, in this regard, is available in Majboor's poem titled *Rootless*: "Each warm evening wet memories transfix my heart and cripple me/Helplessness floods the room/ Objects shiver/My existence is a knot/Home and river and rustle flit and pass/Hope is hazy/The city is a litter of broken bricks, burnt houses and choked gutters/ Their present, our past and your future fall to pieces before the gun/The gapping wound speaks of/ broken man's chopped fate".

Arjan Dev Majboor, aged 75, though uprooted from

his home and hearth in Kashmir's Pulwama district, has his strong roots in the literary field, with as many as 15 publications to his credit. He has five anthologies of Kashmiri verse and translation of Kalidas' *Meghdootam* to his credit. His poems, short stories, research papers and review articles have already appeared in the various literary journals in the country.

And his publication, namely, *Waves*, in an obvious reference to the stubborn among the Kashmiris, contains loaded expression in one poem titled *The Fowl*: One said: 'Wonderful~ The fowl has two legs'/Another said: 'No, the fowl has four legs'/The stubborn are foolish/The third came with a swollen head and bulging belly/He said: 'Wrong ! You are wrong/The fowl has only one leg/I will continue repeating that the fowl has only one leg even if you don't agree'/A cat pounced upon the fowl and had a hearty meal".

Yet another poem titled *The City* has substantiated the substance of the adage: Too many cooks spoil the broth. Majboor has lamented: "A camel ran amok in the city/The wisest among the people said: 'Now everybody is to himself/I am no one to show the way'. There were a thousand masters, a hundred thousand rulers/Now in the city each is to himself/ Those who can see have run away/ All prattle, they are stone-deaf/They call this frantic blindness freedom....." This, precisely is Majboor's verse on worse in Kashmir.

## Majboor's Kashmiri Poetry

Dr. A.N.Dhar

Shri Arjan Dev Majboor is a notable Kashmiri poet, besides being a seasoned scholar and writer, who has a number of published materials – books and critical articles to his credit. Since his displacement from the valley of Kashmir (in the wake of the outbreak of turmoil there), he has been very productive as a writer. In recent years, he brought out two valuable volumes of his Kashmiri verse titled **Padi Samyik** (1993) and **Teol** (1995), of which the former earned him the “Best Book Award” from the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages in 1994.

The publication of the *Waves*, (the volumes under review), bears testimony to Shri Majboor’s serious concern as scholar-poet for the projection of Kashmiri literary works across the globe through their translation into English, which continues to be useful and important as an international language. The present volume is a laudable piece of work brought out specially to serve this desirable objective – enabling a wider readership from across this country and from abroad to have access to the “Culture content” of the original poems.

The slender volume is neatly printed, it has an attractive get-up, with a cover design and also drawings interspersed among the poems – done ably by Vijay Zutshi., a talented sculptor and artist. There are in all 24 lyrics in the volume – constituting a thoughtful collection of the pieces selected from the poet’s large works in Kashmiri and rendered into English by Arvind Gigoo. The titles of the poems are eye-catching and appropriate e.g., *The Topsy-turvy Tree*,

***Snow-man, Chiselled Words, The Dance is On, Rootless, To the Swan, etc.***

Having first gone through a fairly large number of Kashmiri poems, now available in the *Waves* in English translation I find that the translations capture both the essence and broad details of the original pieces. Happily the author of the poems and the translator don't mis-match; the two complement each other. The *Waves*, as a fine product, not only reflects the rich content of the original poems but also reproduces the free verse form of most Kashmiri lyrics *To the Swan* being perhaps the only poem which is not in the free verse form in its Kashmiri version *Teol*. However in the translation versions, the structure of lines has inevitably undergone some alterations. The verse flows with ease in the translations too and we immediately recognize in them the cultural content of the original poems.

Arjan Dev Majboor's deep rooted love of the beautiful valley of Kashmir, the land of his birth and domicile, naturally flows into expression in so many lyrics, some of them tinged with an element of nostalgia. This is true of the long lyric *To The Swan* that comes at the end of the volume *Waves*. In spite of the difficulties and hardships that the poet must have faced as a 'displaced' Kashmiri, he expresses no bitterness and continues to see his cultural roots in the valley, looking at the same time forward to the revival and regeneration of what, in his views, has suffered only a temporary reversal. The theme of 'exodus' finds adequate articulation in other poems too such as *Rootless* and *Prison*. The poet's hopes of revival and his aspirations also find expression in the poem titled *The Coming Millennium*.

There are several poems in which we find the poet's acute observations on life and Nature. Thus in the *Portrait of a Child*, we are presented with the contrast between

‘innocence’ and ‘experience’ in the lines that follow, almost reminding us of William Blake:

The old don’t remember purity  
and  
children don’t know defilement.

Several other poems are focussed on the present social scenario, especially on what obtains in the modern industrial towns – when alongside the economic boom, our time honoured and cherished values have nearly suffered a collapse. In the poem titled *The Topsy-turvy Tree*, we find satirical lines conveying the poet’s veiled observations on the present urban culture, when people are facing problems such as scarcity of water, deforestation, pollution etc., accompanied by a general reversal of old values:

The tree said:  
“Why need water  
when all are mad?  
Hence-forth,  
flowers will bloom up in the sky,  
a whirlpool will trap all,  
it will rain acid,  
beauty will be auctioned,  
the wise will weep,  
the ignorant will multiply,  
greenery will disappear,  
stones will cover the fields,  
the lakes will become sand  
and  
moans will resound.  
Even memory will end.”

There are a few poems including *Creation*, *Secret* and *A Juggler's Trick*, that embody deep philosophical reflections on the meaning and mystery of life. I am particularly impressed by the poem titled *Chiselled Words* that is concerned with the poetic craft – touching upon the poet's preoccupation with the problem of language and meaning. It depicts the poet as a conscious craftsman, operating as a non-conformist in the realm of language “wrestling” with words to accommodate them to his purpose. In these lines the poet tells us how he remained engaged in the task of refining language:

Once more  
 I chiselled words  
 and  
 embellished them.  
 Then I said:  
 “Words, I have given you life.  
 Come out of the prison afresh.  
 Old canons don't become you.

Likewise in the poem *Sign* the poet dwells on the evocative power of words. He conveys that the ‘signs’ have to be read intuitively and not to be deciphered through logical analysis.

Most of the poems that make up the volume under review are finished products (as is equally true of the original pieces). Marked generally by an intellectual tone, they sound ‘modern’ to our ears. Many poems employ words (as phrasal clusters) that function as images and symbols - a fact that also accounts partly for their tautness and density of meaning. The poems reflect the poet's broad humanitarian outlook and his serious concern for the preservation of our age-old culture.

Arvind Gigoo deserves to be complimented for his flawless command of English and his fine craftsmanship and the author for his accomplishment as a creative writer.

*Waves* is most welcome as a volume that is innovative in several respects. It is a lovable book and makes pleasant reading.

## Translation as Literature

Dr. Sanjog Bhan

*Waves* is an English rendition of award winning Kashmiri poems written by the eminent Kashmiri poet and J&K Cultural Academy awardee Arjan Dev Majboor. Argentinean poet Luis Jorge Borges said about a certain book once that the original was unfaithful to the translation. *Waves*, rendered into English by Arvind Gigoo may well fit into the same category of books which according to Borges could best be read independent of the original. The book also contains some fine sketches by the Kashmiri artist and sculptor Vijay Zutshi.

The book has been lauded by many a literary critic for its path breaking translation. The translator, Arvind Gigoo, has done away with old and hackneyed translation techniques. Instead he has evolved a unique style of his own wherein the poems appear to have a strong tint of modernism and magical realism to them. The poems in English stand alone, divorced from the original.

Language seems to have been liberated from traditional diction and prosody. Translation perhaps may sound misleading; the book has actually been transcreated from the Kashmiri. The word play, the rhythm and tone in the transcreated poems are radically different from that of the original. And indeed, it is a landmark transcreation, a true watershed in the history of Kashmiri literature.

Even the sketches by Vijay Zutshi comment and add to the meaning of the poems. These sketches are Daliesque in expression and form. The long poem **To the Swan** (*Teol* in Kashmiri) is a great poem in contemporary Kashmiri poetry and has won the poet many laurels. Some of the themes which

the poems reflect are exile, death, loneliness, freedom, nature, time, Kashmir and nostalgia.

The poems have brought out modernism as one of the recurrent themes in the book and one finds the voice torn ambivalently between the old and the new. The poems subtly herald the birth of the new age wherein old values are still alive yet hidden. The English flavour to a native imagination has given the book a unique place in contemporary regional Indian literatures of India. The poetry in *Waves* lends itself to multiple interpretations and at the same time attracts attention of a bi-cultural audience, viz. the English and the Kashmiri.

The translator has given another voice to a language otherwise known and understood by a minuscule community. The original Kashmiri might lament the loss of the old world and old home, but the English translation seems to speak of multiple identities, addresses and homes spread across the world.

## *Waves – An Estimate*

*Braja Chattopadhyay*

Arjan Dev Majboor, writing in Kashmiri language, living now in Udhampur in the Jammu province, is a major poet and his thirty poems written originally in Kashmiri, have been translated into English by Arvind Gigoo.

Reading all the poems makes one feel the touch of tenderness, sincerity and a dash of serendipity the poet possesses. The poet has the imagination that rides, and he sometimes is lost in comprehensiveness of the thought, and it is happily noted, that gives a tinge of poetic dignity. He is enigmatic in the poem *The Topsy-turvy Tree*, and what follows is a picture of utter desolation and ruin. He is not optimistic about the world's good things but that does not deter him to see images drawn in Nature but perceived by him like the one a poet constructs in intellect and expresses in imagination, and the embodiment is the poetic cluster. The poet in the poem *The New Millennium* sees an "eternal Rider coming". He pines for the recovery of lost virtues, but limitation remains bound in the Indian tradition; it does not strive to release itself from the vague to transcend, never gives a flight towards a new height. In the poem *The Hungry Man* he paints a man very nicely who has no address to knock for the culmination of hunger. The poet has no conflict with politics it surfaces, as a poet is a teacher, a prophet, a builder, a protester, an activist (Remember Gunter Grass). In the poem *Chiselled Words* he strives for invention of words which will give the world, to say, a total humanity and ideal place to live in. This pellucid approach is laudable. Surrealistic he is and in that case his deftness has known success. In *To the Swan* there is a

journey, a search, an option rather a craving for regaining or resurrecting the old phenomena. A vision towards and order of high enlightenment is also earnestly required now. A tomorrow man is a freedom in thought. There are six core thought-depicting drawing by Vijay Zutshi. All the English translated poems are congenial and don't give the idea that they are translated. A very good publication.

## Majboor's *Waves* – A Review

Dr. R.L.Bhat

Over the three score pages, less two, Majboor Weaves patterns of love, longing and desolation, that must now be counted the essential fate of the displaced Kashmiri. Arjan Dey Majboor is a poet, an enduring poet of the Kashmiri, who has half a dozen collection of poetry books to his credit. He is also a researcher in the tradition of J&K Academy, of Art Culture and Languages and has written on various aspects of Kashmir history, art and culture over the long decades of his active life. He is a teacher by profession, a villager by birth. All this adds up to a perceptive being whose intimations of the muses are scattered over this slim volume of translations of his poems. At times the perception gets pithy, at others it lingers in the nostalgia of the time and space that has suddenly gone out of the reach of all the people exiled from the valley of their birth and dreams. In the tradition of old peers but in a new rhythm and language Majboor opens his heart to the swan talking of the visions snatched, image effaced by vicious hands:

A place for all  
to go into a trance  
Implore all  
to restore peace in the valley  
to secure all aching wounds  
and  
to end grief.

For the first half of the twentieth century, Kashmiri poetry was dominated by Azad and Mahjoor. The second half began with Dina Nath Nadim, and belonged to him. Nadim be-

stowed on Kashmiri poetry word, versatility and a knack for grabbing the pith. Majboor's *Waves* is dedicated to Nadim. Nadim also bequeathed to Kashmiri poets a penchant for experimentation. Majboor is an experimenter in his own right. His Kashmiri poems composed of short lines form ribbons of undulation, like a long breath. *Waves* carries mosaics of words, laid one over the other. Majboor stops short of fragmenting words a la e.e. cummings who reaches the pinnacle of experimentation of form. Probably the Urdu-Persian script imposed upon Kashmiri does not permit fragmenting words, else it would have been a worth seeing experiment. The experiments are there upon page after page, with words single, double and triplets tiered one upon the other, to tease their meanings out. Thus is raised the *Snow-man*. This is how the poet stands forlorn in the *Wilderness*.

I am stranded in wilderness  
 waiting for  
 the tree  
 the water  
 and  
 the light

Read alongside the sketch on the cover of the book, the picture become quite vivid.

Years ago Sahir sang : *duniya ney tujrubaat-o-hawadis ki shakl mein/jo kuch diya hai vahi lota raha hoon mein*. All that the time teaches, all that the world imposes, all that the life snatches....all that becomes the material and motivation of the poet some retain them and rise aloft with them, others insist upon returning to visit these shambles to draw upon the life and to taste more of its sombre fare.

I melt slowly,  
 crack up leisurely,

and  
drip because of the sun.

The ache pervades through most of the poems. Worn fantasies and unfulfilled desires peep through excruciatingly.

Each warm evening  
wet memories  
transfix my heart  
and  
cripple me

says the poet in *Rootlessness*. He ends the piece with more' horrid details :

The gaping wound  
speaks  
of broken man's  
chopped fate

Talking of choppings, it appears that the original Kashmiri has suffered much chopping in translation. Since the author has chosen not to give the Kashmiri version (A pity, because Majboor's diction is evocative, if nothing else !), it is difficult to comment on the veracity of the translation. Two poems (*The Fowl and True City*) whose Kashmiri versions this writer could access are much at variance with the originals. Again, since the translation has been got printed by the author himself, it is difficult to say whose is the chopping hand, the poet's, or the translator's ? Or whose the choice ? All the same, in carries the poet's sanction. No complaints.

If anything, the *Waves* underscores the need for opening up the closed caskets of Kashmiri poetry, and

bringing the rich experiments and deep perceptions to a larger audience. Good printing, a fine get up and half a dozen drawings by Vijay Zutshi make *Waves* a delightful presentation. Over its two dozen poems, the poet snatches at the variegations of life, perchance to catch a lesson, perchance to uncover a lead, perchance to lift a veil and see through, for according to him, "The silence of the night and its solitude are a hope for the morning." Another time, another poet Nadim said, of the same night

*Raat moh-rum, is-ti-ra-bus  
op chho shab-num, ky-ah va-nai.*

(the night is privy to the travails the dew is a loud mouth, how'll I tell).

But poets are souls, possessed. Humans much have hopes and mornings to look up to.

## Majboor As A Kashmiri Poet

Prof. R.N. Kaul

*Waves* is a collection of twenty four poems – some short and some long – originally written in Kashmiri by Arjan Dev Majboor and translated into English by Arvind Gigoo. The short number represents a broad spectrum across whose prismatic surface Majboor's imagination soars catching in its sweep many impressions from his inner and outer life. These reflect not only his subjective reactions but also reflect, as if in a mirror, the feelings and thoughts of an exiled community.

The present reviewer has no pretensions to be well-versed in Kashmiri literature and its rich and noble language yet Majboor's poems have impressed him to the extent of provoking him to attempt their review. It is like fools rushing in where angels fear to tread. Yet the attempt is worthwhile.

After reading the translations and some of the originals I cannot help feeling that they do not lack a genuine poetic genius. In fact it is the intelligent translations done by Arvind Gigoo and their artificial patterns that give these poems a true poetic garb.

These thoughts apart, as generally happens in poems composed for Mashairas, the milieu is provided by what is taking place at present socially and politically around the poet. Hence it is that brought up a leftist and an idealist in search of a utopia, Majboor mourns the loss of values and makes his poetic outbursts as vehicles of his deep felt sympathy for the suffering humanity especially those uprooted from their homes by fanatics who have resorted to murders, arson and rape and what is generally known as militancy in the J&K state. The poem *The Topsy – Turvy Tree* poignantly brings out what a distorted and barren picture the earth will be due to the

irrational behaviour of the homo sapiens. The tree has chosen to have its roots in the sky.

The earth will turn into a blazing inferno

.....

the eagles will not fly

it will rain acid.

Urban civilization will go amok. Such is the theme of the poem *The City*. Freedom has only brought 'frantic blindness'. The poem *The Hungry Man* gives a pathetic picture of a starving man :

A lean man  
with a sack  
was searching his fate

.....

hunger was his lone companion.

The poem *Prison* presents, in sustained but restrained rhythm of irony, the state of affairs in temporary tent shelters improvised for Kashmiri migrants at a stone's throw from the state jail where militants are luxuriously housed, fed and entertained. Victims to the scorching sun and flooding rains, saving their lives with the skin of their teeth from scorpions and snakes, to the Kashmiri Pandits verily the camp is a jail whereas the real jail is a heaven :

There is a crematorium by the prison gate

.....

The prisoners smile.

In most of Majboor's poems the style and technique are impressionistic. A feeling, a thought floats across the canvas of his

imagination and he makes an attempt to clothe it in 'chiselled words'. Though there are flashes of genius, the technique of *Mushaira* dialogue form changes good poetry into what becomes banal and even prosaic. For example, the dialogue between the poet and the tree recalls at once the echoes of a typical Kashmiri poetic symposium. Writes Majboor in the poem *The Fowl* :

One said :

'Wonderful, the fowl has two legs'

Another said :

'No, the fowl has four legs :'

Some poems in the selection are inspired by imagination, nostalgia though to a slight extent maudlin. *To the Swan* is a case in point. This poem should touch the sensitive chords of each migrant's heart. Adam and Eve were thrown out of Eden for eating the forbidden fruit. Kashmiri Pandits became targets for their religious creed. Driven out by fanatical hordes called militants they have been living miserable lives for over a decade now. Majboor though a leftist cannot help responding to the sufferings of his brethren. He asks his soul to seek the beautiful spots in the valley and report back his findings. This may give him a vicarious relief. He addresses the swan :

If you get tired  
rest on the golden hay  
on a hill top

.....

dye yourself in the jungle light

.....

the ripples will play  
among the boulders.

The collection has poems rich in imagery and a vocabulary which is rich in sensuousness. No poet can escape being impressed by the appeal Nature's beauty in Kashmir makes to the senses. The valley's musical brooks, fragrant blossoms and flowers, warm and cool sensations, and juicy fruitage and landscapes, cloudscapes, treescapes and waterscapes are in lavish abandon everywhere. Hence Majboor will talk of bubbling brooks, of pastures breathing out scents (as Kahlil Gibran records in *The Prophet*), of snow-flakes coming down like silver coins, of mountains sleeping under covers of chaste snow. Though some poems fail to evoke interest because of their obscurity, yet it is poet's rich sensuous appeal that makes amends.

The book is a worthwhile possession and, as such, an addition to the rich cultural heritage of Kashmir.

## Majboor and *Waves*

R.K.Bharti

The book under review is the sixth book of the renowned poet, writer, researcher; Arjan Dev Majboor. Originally written in his mother tongue Kashmiri, the book contains 24 poems translated by Arvind Gigoo into English.

For the first time I have come across a translation which excels even the original. Nowhere does reader feel the need to go to the original for understanding the intent of the poet.

There is a tradition among our pseudo-poets who think (and wrongly so) that whatever comes to your mind may be put down in short and long lines to make it an everlasting English poem. More often than not one wonders how some well circulated newspapers publish childish ravings of some 'poets'. These self styled poets collect unintelligible gibberish and the obliging editors publish it for reasons better known to them.

*The Waves* in this light falls into a quite different category and one can hope that it will last and make its niche in the Indian English poetry.

The book is dedicated to the late Dina Nath Nadim who gave modern Kashmiri poetry a new direction. Mr. Majboor has greatly been influenced by Nadim and in Kashmiri poetry Mr. Majboor is carrying forward the task of Nadim in bringing this language to its pristine glory.

Mr. Majboor was a staunch leftist at one time and worked with the leaders like G.M. Sadiq. Later even very rich people were influenced by Marxism. These are the people who began the Communist movement in this state. They also represent the contradiction of our times. Without practising social-

ism in their own lives they preached this doctrine to other people.

The leftist lore has made Arjan Dev Majboor one of the protagonists of the 'progressive movement' in this state. These people had some fond visions for the future which is now upon us with all its ferocity. It did not come according to their fond dreams but according to nightmarish realities that have plundered our very lives and all that we stood for. Our dreams have been shattered on the granite rocks of reality. The poet in *The Bronze Hand* says : "My home – in a shambles- is my nightmare." And the reveries woven around *the bronze hand* end in a freeze frame and linger longer in the memory to trouble one's thoughts further.

In *The Topsy-turvy Tree* he says: "They will imprison you/ here truth is banned/the guilty thrive/virtue has decayed and morals are dead". Then the poet envisions the future shock" saying ... "Love will wither, compassion will dry up and man with the snake will enter the cave." The Tree tells him : "Say two suns have risen... man is for sale." Here one comes to a harsh reality. Man had invented a God for himself. Then there were two gods, one the traditional one and the other that of Science. Unfortunately, both these man - made gods favour the rich in showering their bounties and leave people like most of us and the poet including in chaos.

Lord Vishno, the tradition says, has two divine consorts : The Mammon and the Muse Maha Lakshmi and Saraswati. While Laxmi favours the rich, Saraswati is poor herself and cannot take care of her true sons who really worship her. These sons include writers, poets, bards, etc who, again traditionally are among the poor. This contradiction in reality – what is and what ought to have been – has been afflicting the minds of the poets ever since the great Valmiki uttered his first couplet on seeing a hunter killing the swan in love. Centuries after Valmiki, Majboor sends the swan to survey the scene in the devastated valley of Kashmir, over the Pir Panjal range and snow white mountain cliffs and roaring waterfalls and crystal clear waters of

Kausarnag. The Tree warns the poet "Henceforth flowers will bloom up in the sky, a whirlpool will swallow all, it will rain acid, beauty will be auctioned, the wise will weep." And the great saint and poet Lal Ded has said : "Veteh hokhan te henar grazen", Mr. Majboor echos her sentiments in "the ignorant will multiply, greenery will disappear, stones will cover the fields, the lakes will be comes and.

In *Snow Man* the poet allegorically refers to the plight of the Kashmiri Pandits who have been melting silently under the blazing sun of false secularism. The Snow Man says : "But I melt slowly, crack up leisurely and drip because of the sun."

The poet watches helplessly how the true, the good and the beautiful (Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram) have become "fossils of the past ages." He concedes that the coming millennium belongs to science. Says he : "The image of words is in her hand (We call it science)". His Marxist hope raises its head hoping that : "fear will go. Melt all weapons for they kill." But alas the weapons are multiplying and NATOs and mercenaries kill for their sport.

They ask others to conform to tradition. They exhort women to go back to dingy cells and confines of four walls but they do it with Klashinekovs and not with bows and arrows as the same tradition demands it. These people fly in supersonic jets delivering messages of death and destruction to humanity in the name of great human values while they ought to have ridden elephants, camels and horses as the tradition demands. They command obedience with the most modern weapons to keep the hapless millions in poverty, squalor, ignorance and filth.

This dichotomy is the very essence of our times and a foretaste of future shock which the poet wonders if he may be there to "see that birth". "They call this frantic blindness freedom". The poet laments "the blind believe that they are sages. People walk

barefoot. Shoes cap their heads." The lover is in "search for a ray in darkness". Will he find it ? Most probably not !

The poet says "Their present, our past and your future fall to pieces before the gun." Vainly does he "implore all to restore peace in the valley...." because this is not to happen when the vultures circle the sky round and round over the aerial waves.

The get up of the book is attractive. Vijay Zutshi has added beauty to the book with his drawings which also leave a message in the mind of the reader.

*The Portrait of a Child* is for the poet the Utopian innocence of the past and terrifying corruption of the future. This image sums up all the reality of our times and the mind of the poet as well.

## *Waves – a Landmark*

Dr. A.N. Dhar

Based on Shri Majboor's Kashmiri lyrics, the new edition contains 30 poems in English translation (6 more than the number of poems in the first edition). The translations have been very competently done by Arvind Gigoo, whose command of English is excellent besides his innate ability to compose his own poems in English. The first edition won Majboor an award from the Poet's Foundation, Kolkata, that was presented to him at Kolkata on 20 Dec., 1999. With its publication, the original poet won great acclaim as an accomplished and seminal writer.

I made my critical observations on the contents of the book in my review that appeared in the July, 1999 special issue of the trilingual religio-cultural journal titled *Patrika* brought out bi-annualy by the Bhagavan Gopinath Ji Trust (of which I happen to be the Chief Editor). The review also appeared later in the *Indian Book Chronicle* published from Jaipur. To the best of my knowledge, it is being reprinted in several more national journals. Reviews of the book done by other writers have also appeared in the *Koshur Samachar* *The Brown Critique*, *Poetry Today*, *Daily Excelsior*, *Kashmir Times* and *Scoria*. All this bears testimony to the great popularity enjoyed by Shri Arjan Dev Majboor as a significant Kashmiri poet of our times and to Gigoo's emergence as a competent translator who, in my view, has broken new ground as a literary craftsman in the field of translation studies.

I am not going to repeat here what I have said at some length in my review of the first edition of the *Waves*. However, I shall certainly talk briefly about my response to the new edition of the book that was recently released at Jammu. The author, the translator and the publisher deserve to be congratulated on

bringing out the volume in the present shape. It carries now a foreword from the pen of an eminent teacher and scholar of English Prof. T.N.Raina, who is based at Pune, and also projects the translator's contribution and views in a befitting way more conspicuously than was done in the first edition. The translator's note is a welcome feature – something that is desirable to be found in a book of poems in their translated form. The present foreward too serves a useful purpose, being a valuable write-up on the literary work in question and on the original poet. Perhaps a little more said about the translator's literary antecedents also would have been very much in place. I am gratified to note that Prof. T.N.Raina has endorsed the essential content of my earlier review; he has not only incorporated direct quotations from it but also used some other portions after suitably altering or rephrasing them (as he felt it proper).

Both the earlier and the new edition of the *Waves* have attracted adequate critical attention. This is obvious from the many comments by a number of creative writers and critics that are either recorded in the new edition itself or appear as the blurbs printed on the jacket. That establishes that the new edition particularly has been very well received in literary circles and is bound to sell well. In my views among the many English translations of Kashmiri verse that I have come across in my long career, the *Waves* stands out as an innovative volume, which should go down as a landmark in its own right. The new edition contains translations of six more short lyrics of Majboor. These bear the titles *Word, A Gamble, Loneliness, Sensuality, Longing and A Poet's Helplessness*. In terms of their thematic concerns, they are in perfect accord with the poet's lyrics used in the first edition; they too reflect his inner urges as a poet & the values he cherishes most. His major concern with language and meaning and his aspiration for the return of peace in the valley (and for a better world order) are easily

discernable in the new set of poems too. *The Word* brings out the significance of language as man's unique gift, which "preserves" him and his cultural riches. The poem *A Gamble* is replete with images of ugliness, disharmony, death and destruction. It highlights the contrast between a 'pebble' pitted against 'the mountain' as its adversary. In *Loneliness*, the poet advises us to curb the mind's "indolence", sweeten our lives with "honey", turn our gaze to the starry firmament and thus transform the feeling of "desolateness" into joy. The poem *Sensuality* involves an interplay of images aimed at highlighting the destructive aspect of human passions. The poem *Longing* expresses a romantic aspiration : the poet's fancy "seeking to hover in the sky". In the sixth poem titled *A Poet's Helplessness*, we are given an imagistic account of what the loss of imaginative powers means to a poet.

Finally, I come to the translator's note. Herein Gigoo has succinctly expounded his theory and practice of literary translation, trying to justify the transformation that the original poems have undergone in his hands on terms of syntax and lexis. He claims that "the life, meaning and soul of the original continue to throb and flow and vibrate" in the translations. My feeling is that while Arvind Gigoo, as a translator of Kashmiri lyrics into English, has at places not adhered to the principles of 'equivalence' and 'acceptability' considered essential to a sound literary translation, he has on the whole, given proof of his genius and originality through his creative command of English and his innovativeness as a translator.

## *Waves As Art*

*Manoj Sheeri*

Arjan Dev Majboor is a name which has its own place in the literary circles of the state. His selected Kashmiri poems translated into English by Arvind Gigoo has entered the world of poetry books.

There are about twenty four poems in the collection titled *Waves*. The longest poem is titled *To the Swan* which appears at the end of the collection, and the shortest is the fifth poem titled *Fossil* (45 words only). This symbolizes the small and high tides of an ocean called the poet's mind.

The collection has been artistically complied. The compilation itself is a story of man from childhood till death when like a swan his soul soars high to get amalgamated in the supreme soul.

A child is born, he is directed by a bronze hand, he is amazed at the topsy-turvy situations of the world, he plays with 'snowman' with 'fossil', draws 'paintings' of creation, talks to the star, imagines the coming millenium, like a 'fowl' he visits 'the city', dines with a hungry man, and laments with a 'lover', listens to 'chiselled words' and meditates on 'the secret'. But he finds a jungle of 'wilderness', a 'funeral' of creation. His mind ponders. Is it 'a juggler's trick', how to judge it, what are the signs? Meanwhile, 'the dance is on'. Maybe one is rootless in this prison. So let me fly and soar high like a 'swan' to reach the supreme, he feels.

*Waves* is the product of a thirsty soul to do some soul searching.

Translation of poetic expression is not an easy cup of tea. To find an appropriate word, phrase, sentence or thought in one

language for a word, phrase, sentence or thought of another language is job of high academic calibre. Mere scholarship does not pay here. You need a vision to visualize words of both the languages in all the shades on the screen of your mind. It is easy to say, but very difficult to do.

Translations are aimed at reaching people of the other language. At the same time people of one language many not be knowing such about the writers or poets of other languages. So a brief note about the poet of author becomes necessary. A foreword adds more information and an enclosed analysis of the book for an average reader. This is missing in *Waves*.

The collection has been printed and published by Arjan Dev Majboor himself with drawings and cover design by Vijay Zutshi. Collection is dedicated to Dina Nath Nadim.

The book is of a high literary taste, but an average reader will have to keep a dictionary nearby, to understand what the poet wants to tell and translator to communicate.

Spending time with *Waves* can fetch some thoughts for an inquisitive mind for 'each moment is a dance of the mountains...where time laughs a laugh....where colour gives out fragrance....'. I recommend the book to all lovers of poetry.

## Majboor's Verse

P.N.Bhat

The present collection *Waves* is the translation of 24 of Majboor's poems with different themes into free verse in English by Arvind Gigoo, with drawings and cover design by Vijay Zutshi. It is dedicated to Sahtiya Academy and Lenin Peace Prize Award winner late Dina Nath Nadim-the doyen of Kashmiri poetry. *A Portrait of Child* describes the innocence of a child and defilement of man though child is said to be the father of man. In *The Bronze Hand* the poet describes the influence of hand on different people. He is pained at the hand of one who reduced his home to a shambles. In the *Topsy-turvy Tree*, he laments at the degradation of human values. In *Snowman*, the poet speaks of the helplessness of man at his having become a machine bereft of any human qualities. In *Fossil*, he delineates the importance of a fossil that hides the glory of past civilization. In *Painting*, the poet draws a painting of the Ganga flowing from Lord Shiva's hair down to the earth to make it beautiful. The poet desires to merge with the painting to make world worthliving. He feels lonely like a star of the poem *The Star That Fell* where he says:

I am lonesome like you,  
I am lonesome like a milestone.

In *The Coming Millennium*, Majboor is confident that knowledge will spread once again, purity will reign supreme, darkness will disappear, fear will go as weapons of destruction would be destroyed and love and peace will prevail. In *The Fowl*, the poet satirizes the wanton desires of men who quarrel

among themselves for a fowl that is eaten up by someone else. In *The City* he speaks of a camel that has run amuck. Nobody cares to hold it because all the citizens are masters of their own. This kind of individualism has ruined them. This is rightly apt in the context of his own community. In *The Hungry Man* he equates wealthy people with rag-pickers. The latter puts even a stone in his sack which he picks on the way for it might get him a loaf. This is a sarcasm on the present society having deep and wide chasm between the rich and the poor. In *Lover*, the poet is hopeful of a better tomorrow out of the present chaos and despair when he says;

New twigs will sprout,  
the mirror will speak,  
the earth will smile,  
the rising sun will watch  
her dream and her dance.

In the *Chiselled Words*, the poet says that his old poems have lost meaning in the present context. So he chisels new words of hope and sympathy, love and beauty which will wash away paleness of the earth, sweeten the stale conscience of man and light the dark meandering streets. In *Secret* he speaks of the glorious past that was his and now has become a sheer memory. Again, in *Wilderness*, the poet says the tree, water and light—symbols of life and human civilization—have been snatched away from him and he gropes in the darkness. Being a poet, he still hopes that his castle, though of glass, will not shatter as it holds his glorious past so dear to him. In *The Dance is On*, he presents two pictures, one of desolation and the other of hope. It is the trauma of Kashmiri Pandits and their present struggle which is depicted in this short but crisp poem. Again, in *Rootless*, he is

surcharged by the environs of his dwelling place before the forced exodus. It was so beautiful and picturesque on the bank of stream, says he. His house has been reduced to ashes, belongings plundered. Now that gives a desolate look. The gun of the militant has shattered his past, present and future. He says,

The present,  
our past  
and your future  
fall to pieces before the gun.

The victim is broken and the fate is sealed. In *Prison*, Majboor feels that all Kashmiri Pandits have become prisoners at their present places. Their heritage has gone to winds, their past is burnt. But he still hopes that blossoms will bloom even in the dry sand.

At the end of the book, there is a long poem titled *To the Swan*. The poet pines for his birthplace, his home, its beautiful surroundings, its glorious past, its beautiful men, women and children who loved one another. He speaks at length about Kashmir to the swan and requests it to go there and see for itself as to what has happened there, why and how have the people there taken up guns to kill their own brothers, spread hatred and chaos, bring darkness all around to the beautiful vale that belonged to great seers who spread knowledge, peace and love. The poet is depressed by a deep agony that tears roll down his eyes. At the end, he requests the swan.,

Fetch me a swig of water  
For I am parched.

Translation cannot substitute for the original. Yet Arvind Gigoo, through his competent translation, has done justice to Majboor's poems. The get-up and printing of the book is very fine. Drawings of Vijay Zutshi speak volumes

## *Waves – An Appraisal*

Prof. S.N. Wakhloo

Majboor's *Waves*, printed and published in a delightful get-up, is the English translation of some of his Kashmiri poems culled from his various colourful poetical gardens. The poet has titled this thin volume *Waves*. Undoubtedly, his mind is a perennial river in which there is ebb and flow of the waves of deep thoughts and intense feelings. Hence these poems are such waves. This work is a cocktail of the reflections and observations expressed in beautiful words.

It is disadvantageous to attempt a critical estimate of the translated poems when the poems in original Kashmiri language are not incorporated along with the translations. But the translator Arvind Gigoo has done a commendable job as his translated poems keep in place on their own independent strength without losing the realistic flavour of the poet's original utterances. The poems in the English translation are of high order of merit. The drawings of Vijay Zutshi are done artistically, and fittingly illustrate the purport of the poems they are supposed to do.

Majboor created and followed the bent of his own nature and turned to no one for a mentor or model. He is a self fashioned man, but poetry cannot sprout on a dry sandy track; it must have the oasis of inspiration and influences. As is obvious, Majboor spent his lifetime in the paradisical environment of nature, and "impulse from the vernal wood" has implanted aesthetic sensibility in his mind. Besides, the poems reveal that his soul has been drawing stimulation from the springs of his elementary experiences. Although his inspiration is set free from the literary reminiscences, and sought

his own individual path but having studied the vast Kashmiri and Hindi poetic literature, it is psychologically impossible not to draw out some elixir from the fountainhead of the old Muse. All this has enabled him to strike fine chords of our turbulent times.

Majboor is a poet and he does not set his aim for the search of ideas, which he regards as the proper end of a philosopher, but he has allowed the emotion of an intelligence which does not refuse itself the human privilege of feeling to come out in half tones through his work. This is illustrated in his poem *Snowman*. This poem shows that his aspiration to reality is more courageous, bold and violent.

The inner world is no less a reality to Majboor, and so his psychological curiosity gives itself scope in deep ruminations which tantamount to auto-psycho-analysis. This has given originality to his poems like a modern poet. The very first poem *Portrait of a Child*, in which much is unsaid, reveals how in retrospection he feels that his childhood had a purity of soul which got defiled as he grew up. In some poems like *The New Millennium* and *To The Swan* he has an epic imagination which spent itself in an allegorical evocation.

Majboor warmly espoused the cause of the poor and bitterly denounced the wealthy drones that abound in society. He is troubled by the present moral disquietude and degradation. He finds how selfishness turns man into a wolf. *The Topsy-turvy Tree* shows Majboor's graphic power in which he mirrors the restlessness and pensiveness due to the topsy-turvydom of ethical values. The vultures have destroyed the culture, and the prestige of ancient sages has vanished.

Majboor is not a revolutionary or a progressive in the sense in which fiery souls like Rehman Rahi, Firaq and even Nadim are. But the poignancy of his suffering leads him to humanism. The poem *The Hungry Man* shows his mood of disgust against the existing order of facts and society. Social con-

sciousness is his forte. Some of his poems are replete with symbolism and the mention of Stone in the poem is a symbol of stone-hard life of a poor man.

Yet it is for his ethical force that Majboor would best be remembered. This feeling at the bottom of his consciousness is incontrovertible enough. As a catalyst to this there is the intellectual cynicism. His clear sighted realism is mixed with irony and satire. There is pathos to be found in his poems. In the *Hungry Man* we can read the mystery of fate, with which the poor man consoles himself. All the same the mood of his thought is pessimistic.

Style is the man. Majboor is lucid, cryptic and skilful. His social interpretation has shaped itself an adequate instrument of sweet language and a free verse voluntarily shorn of all regular measure.

But all said and done, these poems demand from the reader an intense effort of mental synthesis and understanding which in the present day life is a great strain on the reader. The intellectual cynicism and gloom is needlessly intensified. In conclusion it may be said that Majboor's peculiar power of sensitive sympathy creeps into the reader's heart and nestles there.

## Majboor - A Sandwiched Soul

*Dr. Manzoor Fazili*

Arjan Dev Majboor's poems, short stories, anthologies, research papers, which appeared in various literary journals from time to time reflect his quest to know and let know his cultural heritage. He is conscious of his social environment and cultural ethos. The political upsurge and violence in the Valley forced him to leave Kashmir in 1990. Since then he feels alienated. He is conscious of separation from his native village and native place. The wise Kalhan tells us that the people naturally are tendered to nationalism or love of their birthplace. His belief is that continued residence at a place produces in the mind of living beings, through the logical process of connection and exclusion, a sense of belonging to one's own country. Majboor is no exception. He was born in the valley, lived most of his life within a society known as Kashmiri social system. He is, as such a part of the society, in which he was born and brought up

His book, *Waves*, translated version of his Kashmiri poetry by Arvind Gigoo, is thus the reflection of his partitioned soul, caused by the separation of his native land. If not all, at least most of the poems included in the collection are a manifestation of his isomeric soul

When the poet's soul transcends the world of his past, he finds his virginity in the chubby face of his childhood, which when his inner self reacts, finds a defiled future. Thus his heart aches on account of the disappearance of old values and presently confused Kashmiri. He glorifies his past and, if not downgrades, but does not reconcile with the present. He says: Are you my virgin past?

and

Are you my defiled future?

James Reeves is of the opinion that poetry is as rich and various as life itself; to poets it is life. Majboor is really Majboor (helpless) when he sees that his glorious past is crumbling before his eyes. He looks around and finds that the past which had been blessed by the goddess is decaying now and says:

This wakefulness is dying now.

In his past, he enjoys the association of his native land. His native land and place of birth are part of his memory and in that past, he finds value - oriented life. Then his helplessness, in going back even to his home seems to him bleak and separation agonizing. That is why Majboor sings :

My Home  
—in a shambles—  
is  
my nightmare.

When he becomes conscious of his nightmare both in response to his impulse for native place as well as the peace, tranquillity and value system of the times gone by, he shudders:

I recall the gem - like  
nails  
and  
the fingers  
and

the palm  
of the bronze hand.

His dilemma does not stop with anything but his depression on account of separation from his native village and place. He finds everything topsy turvy. When he observes a topsy-turvy tree, he talks to him:

Sir, my roots are in the sky  
this way the world will be set right

The political turmoil in his native place has a question mark for our poet. He is not sure what shall be likely the result of the instability. He is not sure whether he comes back to his house or not. He does not know whether he has chance to meet his child companions and school mates. He does not think that the old women and men, whom he revered during his lifetime in his native land are alive. He does not know that he will be able to sit on the side of the Nograed and the like. His apprehensions of devastation of forests and decay of all the beauties of nature in Kashmir, are a source of agony for him. Then he suggests that man will be on sale and its roots would not need water because all will turn useless. In course of upside down position, the flowers will bloom in the sky. According to the poet, beauty will be auctioned and the wise will be asleep, ignorance will increase in number and greenery will disappear. Arjan Dev Majboor, is helpless to tell us:

Even memory will end.

It means that he would find value free society and the earlier value oriented society will be forgotten.

The poet finds himself converted to a snow man one morning, leaving struggle behind him. He is thrust into a darkness, where

nothing is seen, heard or observed. They come and tell him to laugh, play and dance and walk but the poet seems melting. He finally declares:

The tendril under my feet  
watches  
this invisible shrinkage.

The poet is in agony on account of his separation from his land. He visualizes "the city", in which a camel ran amok. He wants to convey to the readers the experience of anarchy and accordingly says, "there were a thousand masters and hundred thousand rulers". He further adds that in the city each is to himself. In a value free society of Kashmir Arjun Dev finds himself sandwiched on being brought up under a discipline of a value oriented society and placed in a different environment. The poet leaves the analysis of the Kashmiri to different opinions. He declares them that they are stubborn and foolish. The same time, he is depressed on account of its future and thinking that our cultural heritage is high-jacking saying:

A cat pounced upon the fowl  
and  
had hearty meal.

Arjun Dev, the poet who has the impulse of loving his cultural heritage, tries to discover hard and essential life within him. The poet's intention is to show his innerself and consciously or unconsciously, he has hard realities of life to experience. In response to his sentiment he finds a "hungry man" in a sinful city, in which all frolic in luxury, but a lean man, has hunger as a lone companion. He collected many things in his sack

but everything was useless for him. However, the poet has hard talk about it in the following lines:

At last  
he found the Stone  
and paused for a thought,  
but  
put the Stone into his sack  
and  
moved on.

Our poet asks the modern youth to give meaning to words so that they idealize them. The reply from the modern man or youth is that the words are useless and meaningless. The wise words of the past are not cared at all. There is anarchy – anarchy in the value structure of the society. In this disappointment, our poet shouts:

Words, I have given you life  
come out of the prison afresh;  
old cannons don't become you.

Jammu, the land of religiosity, alien to a poet, who lives of his own is different to time. The poet away from home, seeing his erstwhile society in anarchy and his native house and place in shambles, cries in wilderness. In his wilderness he is besieged within a dusty cobweb. The world maligned him, treating him in a stage of a caravan. Then he asks:

peep into me  
and listen to the ancient ballad  
it is endless.

In the poem ***Funeral***, the poet seems to be obsessed by disappointments. He admits that the long bright day has entered into the black night. While expressing all the frustrations, deprivations, aimless life and hazy goals, he seems to fall like a mystic into the dark night of the soul. However, he boldly and courageously restores himself and advises us to struggle in life saying:

Use the plectrum  
inspite of  
the funerals.

Possibly no reviewer can ever forget to critically appreciate his great poem ***To The Swan***, which reveals in its totality the septum of his soul. The poem reveals like a mystic, that a dark night has fallen on the soul of the poet. It indicates to the partition of his soul as it asks the swan to fly over the mountains with a message to his native land, the valley of Kashmir. He opens his heart to a swan, brain washing him by his own washing him by his own memories of the past. He recollects his "heavenly green spot" to show his own "scarred hush of my being". Then our poet says to swan:

Please fly on to the world that belonged to the poet or his native land. He directs him to fly over the Peer Panjal and find the place which was source of his light. He cautions him about the blinding fog and clouds (i.e. the turmoil in the valley) to find the right path. The poet does not want the swan to fall in love with the damsel of the forest or the valley of Kashmir.

He wants the poet to pick up the essence or substance of the flower that is Kashmir. Love its jungles, its history and culture and kiss the milky snow. Return with the wonder that is Kashmir. The poet tells him to rest near a spring, enjoy the

airy bridges and to sit under shade of trees, move through the crevices and the rivulets. The poet is likely to bless the bird saying:

This haste promises a light -  
 Bless me  
 for  
 the task is sublime.

Next the poet gives a direction to the swan that the latter shin up a fir tree and relax in the holidays. He thinks that the wind in Kashmir will give him peace and bliss. The poet wants that the swan enjoys the juicy fruits and hears the symphony of the trees in the forest. Then he tells the bird:

let your mind swim  
 in the icy water.

In case the bird feels tired, it can rest on hay on a hill top. The poet desires the swan to spread his wings so that he reaches back his 'old paths'. Knowing well the natural beauty of the valley, the poet is optimistic regarding the bliss that might be available to the bird. From distance the poet predicts that they will say :

Look !  
 that is a tiny bird  
 on the wing  
 or  
 a morning lotus in the lake.

The poet advises the swan to visit the valley so that he is enchanted by the lush greenery. He wants to convey that every tune has a meaning. He is conscious that the goal is

distant but good time is coming. The poet wants that the swan conveys to the cliffs in the land that they were sometime glistening with splendour. It had a glorious past and Kashmir was ruled by wisdom. According to him the wisdom flourished in the valley. The poet is conscious that time 'flies fast' and accordingly directs the bird to catch it by the forelock.

The partitioned soul of the poet is subject to agony on account of his past, sometimes in pain to recollect the natural beauty of Kashmir. Sometimes he is disappointed and frustrated on account of his separation from the native land. Then sometimes he continues that the colours or hues need not benumb anybody's sense. He, afterwards, directs the bird to gather the herbs and cure ones self. He would like that pricking thistles need to be burnt. Arjun Dev consoles himself with the idea of adventure of snow clad mountains and bid farewell to the fear, so that one can reach the goal. Alas! he himself was afraid and ran away in 1990. He encourages the swan to fly over the green fields. He wants to change the situation so that the landscape will recount a new and fresh tale. He wants the bird to unveil the mystery so that darkness is replaced by light.

The poet recollects his childhood and glorifies it and is proud of enjoying sunny days, night's peace, love and peace of the earlier times. But according to the poet one must muster courage so that one can go ahead. He continues to fight them because life is not a bed of roses and then conveys them after the wise :

Time is holy, use it well

The poet desires to decipher the words so that tomorrow turns to be safer than the present which is in liquid state. He predicts that dark clouds or turmoil will flee and reconstruction shall take place. Like the German wall, the walls

between communities shall crumble down and spread love over the hamlets and villages. In due course of time, according to the poet, turmoil shall be replaced by peace.

The poet has the belief to separate truth from the untruth. He thinks that in our society there are still people of conscience and integrity who can change it for better future. There are infinite blooms and green patches and the poet asks the bird to get him sweet water. Afterwards, poet again gets nostalgic regarding his native land by saying that in past kings, courtiers and travellers drank in the land., saints counted beads, hermits meditated and turned into trance. Thus he implores the powerful to restore peace in the valley, to cure all aching wounds and to end grief.

The poet at the end of the poem recollects the past history of his native land by talking about the "seven springs" only to know that renunciation is a reality. The waters, boulders and the tales of Nagas are recollected and he says :

Piety will swill stones  
the soul of the valley is pure.

He remembers the ancients ruins, which are asleep and wants that they be awakened to retell the tale of pleasurable past. He aches and pains to recall his past and wants to revive the old Kashmiri to find a saint in prayer, lioness in rage, cataracts flowing and a stag capering in a deep canyon. The poet revives the memory of the old days at the green spot on the river bank, springs, uplands with flowers, cool shadows, which create much agony in him that he cries :

Fetch me a swig of water  
for  
I am parched.

Thus the soul of the poet tumults in such a manner that he turns Majboor (helpless) and is sandwiched between the love of his native land and its separation. He aches, has agonies and woes that his personality is shattered. We find the soul of the poet in septum yet we are helpless. It is shared out between value free and value oriented society. Thus Arjan Dev turns to be poetic in the poetry of his inner self.

## *Waves – Point of View*

*Dr. Premi Romani*

Arjan Dev Majboor is a noted poet of Kashmiri. He writes stories and essays. Possessed of a deep observation he has also emerged as a very good translator (After translating Kalidas' masterpiece *Meghdoot*). With all this, we can't forget that poetry is his first love. He couldn't escape being influenced by progressive literature and he has to his credit about a dozen of books on poetry and literature in respect of different subjects and themes

Majboor's *Waves* is a collection of 30 representative poems. This collection has been translated into English by a very good translator named Arvind Gigoo. Translating a version from one language into another and then maintaining the essence of thought and beauty is really a great work. This is possible only when an artist has to discipline, train and sweat through the labour. This translation work proves beyond doubt that the man behind is quite conversant with using words in right permutations and combinations and he has amply succeeded in presenting the ethos and beauty of Kashmir.

*Waves* – the book flows with different aromas – is somewhere majestic, sometimes sonorous and also a model of tranquillity, the overall impact being to soothe and calm down the turbulence and creating peace. The reader is filled with a treasure, a treasure of beauty and harmony. The moods of the *Waves* have been presented with an artistic depth and everything is invested with a grace.

*Portrait of a Child, The Topsy turvy Tree, Snowman, Fossil, The Star that Fell, The Hungry Man, The Fossil, The City, Lonelines, The Fowl, Rootless* are singular at their own places and composed with a dexterity and in the composition

there is a flow of maturity. In *Portrait of a Child*, the poet has projected the thinking of a child, the child is shown developing under the strength of feelings. He presents the child as a mould of innocence and perfection, far away from the mundane and he lives in the world of innocence. He has presented very artistically the varying changes and moods which make the child perfect.

*The Topsy-turvy Tree* is related to the environmental conditions which are degrading. The poet has painted the mental crisis of man – the crisis which is eating into the vitals of things around and then has been presented through tree. Many questions are raised and answers wanted.

*Snowman* is a symbolic composition, depicting Kashmir. Snowman has been presented as a standing and emotional edifice representing nostalgic memories of those who have migrated from Kashmir.

*The Star That Fell, The Hungry Man, Loneliness, Secret* are such other compositions which reflect tragedy of ages.

The poem *Loneliness* represents the helplessness of man and another composition *Rootless* also reflects the moods and manners of time. The poet has painted the man and his taxed mind, the stresses and anxieties that accompany everyone. The poem bears abundant relevance to the present times.

*To the Swan* is a composition through which the poet has probed into the past. The past enters the scenic and natural ethos along with the ups and downs of life. It reflects Majboor's attachment with the vale of Kashmir, overflowing with profundity its beauty, emotions, grandeur and everything that stand for essence of human relationship.

*Waves* so to say is the story of life and its various varying stages. The book begins with something presenting man. He has portrayed infancy, childhood, youth; he has talked about

such period's of life, where caution is required and if there are mistakes can lead to dangers. He has identified the various moods of life with the depth of a promising writer. He has then referred to the old age and then the time when man begins to read the end. The essence of the book as a whole is measurable in varying moods of man. If these compositions do not carry the titles, these can run into a mature and a perfect commentary on life.

Arvind Gigoo has with strength of pen dressed the poems into English language and the attempt has borne fruit. This rendering of Majboor's compositions into English is an outstanding example of translator's efforts to pass Majboor across to the world and address the issues. The translator, it seems, has probed with a surgical precision and an intellectual depth into the collection. The translator has managed successfully to maintain and retain the beauty of poems. A great quality of the translator's work is that translation runs parallel and close to what is contained in the original compositions.

## A Note on *Waves*

*Dr. B.K.Moza*

Shri Arjan Dev Majboor is a distinguished Kashmiri poet, besides being a seasoned scholar, writer, journalist and translator. Born in Zainapora in District Pulwama of Kashmir in 1924 he had his early education in Pulwama. Subsequently he went for further education to Srinagar and Lahore. He is M.A in Hindi. After an initial career as a teacher, he distinguished himself as a promising Kashmiri poet in 1955 by bringing out his original work in Kashmiri verse, *Kalame-Majboor* and a translation of Kalidasa's *Meghdoot* in Kashmiri language. Subsequently he joined J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages at Srinagar. Since his displacement, in the wake of the outbreak of terrorist turmoil at Srinagar, he migrated to Udhampur and with all constraints, compulsions and agony at heart due to this unfortunate internal displacement, he remained engrossed, as a productive writer, achieving laurels as Kashmiri poet and writer. He brought out in 1993 a volume in Kashmiri language, titled, *Padi Samyik*, which earned him the "Best Book Award" from J&K Academy of Art & Culture. In 1995 he brought out *Teol*, in Kashmiri verse which amongst other publications entitled him to an award. Besides, his numerous publications have won him the All India Radio Award for his contributions to literature. His latest (1999) collections of Kashmiri verse, translated very aptly into English, *Waves*, was awarded by Poets Foundation, Calcutta the "Poetry Award" – 1999. This book brings out his deeprooted love for the beautiful valley of Kashmir the land of his birth where he sees his cultural root. His poems, *Portrait of a Child*, *The Topsy-turvy Tree*, *Swan*, *Creation*, *Chiselled Words*, etc. reveal his acute observation of life and nature, contrast between "innocence and experience", satirical views

on present social scenario that exist in industrial towns and his broad humanitarian outlook. Shri T.N.Koul rightly says "Arjan Dev Majboor's poetry is marked by deftness of expression, deep introspection, progressive outlook and mature treatment. His works constitute a muffled outcry of his bruised heart against the disappearance of old values and the disequilibrium of modern life".

## Contributors

Prof. Trilokinath Raina

Taught English Literature at the National Defence Academy Pune. Author of: *An Anthology of Modern Kashmiri Verse*, *Best of Mahjoor*, *Cradle for Leadership*, *Dina Nath Nadim* and *A History of Kashmiri Literature*.

Maharaj Krishan Santoshi

Hindi poet and short story writer. Author of *Burf Par Nange Paoon*, *Yeh Samay Kavita Ka Nahin*, *Is Baar Shaed*.

Dr. K.L.Chowdury

Physician and poet. Author of *Of Men, Militants and Gods*. Contributes articles to various journals.

Dr. T.N.Dhar

Professor of English and Director of Arts Programme, Asmara University, Asmara. Author of *Under The Shadow of Militancy* (The Diary of an Unknown Kashmiri). Critic, reviewer and researcher.

Dr. Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani	Critic, poet, translator, researcher. Author of <i>Mahanaya Prakash (Kashmiri Sahitya Ka Itihas)</i> . Editor of <i>Ummesh</i>
B.L.Kak	Journalist. Author of <i>The Fall of Gilgit; The Untold Story of Indo-Pak Affairs From Jinnah to Bhutto; Changing Shadows in Ladakh; Z.A. Bhutto: Notes From Death Cell; Kashmir: Problems and Politics; Kashmir: Untold Story of Men &amp; Matters.</i>
Dr. A.N.Dhar	Taught English Literature at the University of Kashmir. Critic, poet and translator. Author of <i>Mysticism Across Various Cultures</i> . Editor of <i>Patrika</i> .
Dr. Sanjog Bhan	Reviewer. Contributes articles to various journals.
Braja Chattopadhyay	Bengali poet, critic, reviewer. Contributes articles to various journals.
Dr. R.L.Bhat	A doctor by profession. Journalist, reviewer. Contributes articles to various journals

Prof. R.N. Koul	Author of <i>Lal Ded, Sheikh Mohd. Abdullah</i> (A Political Phoenix), <i>From the Happy Valley</i> (A flower vase of English verse)
R.K. Barti	Journalist and translator
Manoj Sheeri	Contributes articles to various journals
P.N. Bhat	Contributes articles to various journals. Translated <i>Nilmat-purana</i> in to Hindi
Prof. S.N. Wakhloo	Author of the novel <i>Habba Khatoon</i> . Contributes articles to various journals
Dr. Manzoor Fazili	Taught Political Science at the Kashmir University. Researcher. Contributes articles to various journals. Author of some books.
Dr. Premi Romani	Urdu poet. Author of <i>Sungimeel</i> . Reviewer. Contributes articles to different journals.
Dr. B.K. Moza	Reviewer. Chief Editor <i>Vitasta</i> , Kolkata.

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